

Union Square Civic Advisory Committee
Meeting Notes 4/2/14

Master Developer Presentations

I. Introduction

Wig Zamore, chairman of the CAC, welcomes and opens the discussion for public comment.

II. Public Comment Period

- As the CAC begins to review proposals, remember to relate the proposals to the city's needs, including job creation and growing the commercial tax base. Urge caution in selecting a developer with primarily residential background. Look at developers with R&D experience, commercial and retail.
- Consider giving extra weight to developers that have experience with infrastructure, including water and sewer; Union Square is the site of the former Miller's River
- CAC should agree upon which criteria are most important to them.

III. Meeting Format, Process

Edward O'Donnell, Director of Economic Development, explains that this process began with a look back at Union Square's history; a detailed look at the RFQ and criteria; which development teams reflect CAC's values, priorities? Also consider which teams are best financially equipped. This meeting will provide an overview of other development projects and then begin discussion of development teams' strengths and weaknesses.

- First priorities once master developer is selected:
 - Station design with MBTA
 - Meet with Parsons and CAC on infrastructure
 - Meet with local businesses and CAC to conduct charette
- Powderhouse School: process by which the advisory group gave comments and ranking led to one recommendation and two alternatives; CAC would be well-served to use similar model

IV. Presentation by Wig Zamore

- Critical to integrate transit into the heart of USQ
- 12+ acres is actually relatively small for a master developer (MD); keep that in mind
- On average, MD can develop 100k sq. ft. / year
- 1st reality: GLX station is on its way; want MD to work with MBTA
- SomerVision values to guide redevelopment process; highlights goals in key categories.
Translate the goals into reality.
 - Important to address jobs imbalance; Boston/Cambridge have 2x as many jobs as residents; opposite for Somerville. Implications to tax base, schools, daytime population
- Overview of other developments
 - University Park (Cambridge): joint venture between MIT and Forest City (20-25 acres); key issues included traffic, new vehicle trips. Edges blend into edges of project and are in relative scale to surrounding neighborhoods.

- Kendall Square: 20-25 acres; Boston Properties and Cambridge Redevelopment Authority. Took about 30 years to complete.
- One Kendall Square: adaptive reuse of buildings; at one point had 400 startup companies. Now used mostly for biotech.
- Fan Pier (20 acres) and Pier 4 (5 acres) including rights to water: Fallon and New England Development. There were 6 different developers that worked on this project over 3 decades. 54% of project had to be open public space (not part of developments)
- Income gap: Somerville vs. State and other selected communities—Somerville still heavily reliant on state funds

V. Questions/Discussion among CAC

- Eminent domain: Power of eminent domain expected to be used very little, if at all. If eminent domain is needed, business or residents will receive fair market value plus relocation costs. RFQ states that in cases of eminent domain, SRA will do the taking but it will be backstopped by MD
- MD will be principals of teams, including architects, designers, and construction companies. City will ONLY contract with the MD; other team members are subject to change over time.
- Permitting process: City had a rough idea of what will go on each parcel but the City expects to be flexible. One permit for the whole determining mix and max of uses, but individual parcels will go through standard review process.
- Quincy redevelopment: Should there be extra weight given to financials given the collapse of the Quincy project? Yes—consider who is best able to work with us, the state and feds on this project as it will include a lot of infrastructure work in addition to traditional development.

VI. Overview of Master Developer Presentations (CAC comments)

- Trinity:
 - Liked architect (ICON). Really liked the Hamilton canal project in Lowell – seemed like infill and adaptive reuse (similar to USQ).
 - Trinity is excellent in housing development, but most experience seems to be in gateway cities, not cities like Somerville where real estate is strong, costs to acquire property are higher. Don't see them working in a project as complex as this.
 - If you take ICON out, MD team not favorable
- HYM:
 - Tom O'Brien (used to be at the BRA); working at North Point and redevelopment of garage at Government Center
 - Experience with GLX; could their experience with GLX be at odds with USQ redevelopment? General consensus- experience is a benefit for USQ.
 - No construction manager chosen yet, should this be a concern? No.
 - Unique ideas like changing entire parcel into a park
 - Great letters of recommendation; seemed like sincere votes of confidence
 - Seemed least "salesy" of the presentations that night
- FRIT/National Development
 - Seem to understand and be willing to work with City on things like zoning
 - Have worked to reduce parking requirements on other projects
 - Less discussion re: displacement of businesses; doesn't seem to have a strategy for this
 - Put forward some solid ideas re: gateways, connections, etc.

- Proposal seemed geared more toward Boynton Yards and less toward USQ and infill development. Seem more familiar with ground up development like ASQ.
 - Building these connections and developing Boynton Yards is the greatest opportunity for job creation vs. residential
- Talked about relationship of buildings to people
- Answered Q's re: weakness in earnest
- Mystic View TF member says that FRIT has been a great partner to work with and responsive to their concerns
- Agreed to legally binding agreement re: uses and build out at ASQ (favorable)
- FRIT already has a good relationship with City and MBTA
- Ed O'Donnell notes that FRIT and National Development would each be strong candidates in their own right; strong combination, an asset for USQ
- FRIT has really stepped up on the City's local hiring/jobs initiatives

VII. Closing Remarks

CAC Chairman Wig Zamore thank CAC for its thoughtfulness.

- Next CAC meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 08, 2014 at 6PM at the Argenziano School. Follow-up meeting (if needed) will be April 15, 2014.